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RESPONSE TO DCI QUERIES

If the Polish government makes martial law work and settles Poland, will it allow the Soviets additional freedom of action elsewhere?

Stabilization of the situation in Poland would have some impact on Soviet freedom of action. If the Polish government's gamble on martial law obviates the necessity for direct Soviet intervention, Moscow could stand to gain at least indirectly. A solution to the Polish crisis would enhance Soviet credibility in any gesture or demonstration of support for Syria against Israel, Libya against Egypt, or even Cuba against the United States. The Soviets may even be tempted to divert international attention from their vulnerability on their Western border by stepping up actions in Central America. More generally, Soviet policymakers and planners will be free to turn their attention to other problems.

Soviet freedom of maneuver elsewhere will continue to be circumscribed, however, at least in some measure, by the following:

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Is there any relation between the escalation of leftist activity in Central America, mobilization in North Korea, Poland, and Afghanistan?

We have no evidence of any direct connection among the events in question--escalation of leftist activity in Central America, mobilization in North Korea, augmentation of Soviet forces in Afghanistan, and the deepening crisis in Poland. Recent political and military actions in those areas suggest less a carefully coordinated global offensive across a broad front than relatively isolated developments explicable for the most part in terms of local circumstances and interests.

-- Moscow almost certainly does not relish the prospect of having its military burden in Afghanistan compounded by the necessity for a military intervention to quell disturbances in Poland.

-- Moscow has no influence in P'yongyang; it is unlikely it was consulted during preparations for the recent mobilization exercise there.

-- Moscow's support for leftist forces in Central America is a response to local opportunities; although it would hardly be adverse to having developments there divert US and Western attention from events in Poland.

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It is more likely that political leaders in the third world may take advantage of the preoccupation of the superpowers in order to advance their interests. Kim Il-sung, for example, may believe that this is an opportune moment for heating up differences on the Korean peninsula. Central America leftists may also see an opportunity to escalate their actions in view of global preoccupation with the Polish crisis. Israel's annexation of the Golan may have been predicated on the notion that there would be little international reaction at this crucial juncture.

